The effect of alternation in power on electoral intimidation in democratizing regimes.

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Abstract

There is as yet little consensus in the literature as to the underlying drivers of electoral violence. This article identifies a key mechanism explaining the use of electoral intimidation, a form of violence, in democratizing regimes. Within this context, we argue that the use of electoral intimidation against the opposition is most likely to be observed when a country moving to democracy has not yet experienced an electoral turnover. Building on previous theoretical and empirical findings, we provide evidence supporting the idea that alternation in power serves as an effective tool to decrease the tensions between electoral winners and losers. Furthermore, we show that alternation in power is conditional on the performance of electoral management bodies. Based on a sample of 331 elections in 53 countries that have inaugurated multiparty competition since 1989, we find strong and robust support for our theoretical claims. Firstly, we show how alternation in power is determined by the degree of autonomy electoral management body adopted as part of the political opening process. Secondly, we provide evidence that electoral turnover depresses the use of electoral violence after controlling for relevant variables and correcting for selection issues.

Keywords: electoral violence, electoral intimidation, electoral management bodies, alternation in power, democratization

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Introduction

Elections are generally recognized as a peaceful mean of resolving social differences, yet violence often besets electoral processes, even in democracies. A burgeoning literature on electoral conflict has identified this as a distinct form of political violence (Bhasin & Gandhi, 2013; Birch & Muchlinski, 2017b; Collier & Vicente, 2014; Daxecker, 2012; Fjelde & Höglund, 2016; Taylor, Pevehouse & Straus, 2017). In this article, we focus on incumbent-instigated intimidation, the most common type of electoral violence worldwide (Birch & Muchlinski, 2017a). Our aim is to understand the political and institutional drivers of this form of violence in democratizing regimes[1] and, specifically, how intimidation is related to the consolidation of democratic practices.

State-initiated electoral intimidation has been analyzed in a number of recent studies that view this form of electoral violence as being the result of the socio-demographic structure of society and the vulnerability of underprivileged groups to coercion (Dercon & Gutiérrez-Romero, 2012; Gonzales Ocantos et al., 2016), the dynamics of patronage and coercive clientelism (Mares & Young, 2016), or the competitive context in which elections are held (Hafner-Burton, Hyde & Jablonski, 2014; Wilkinson, 2006).

Elections in democratizing regimes have been found to be more vulnerable to violence than those held in either fully democratic or fully authoritarian states (Klaus & Mitchell, 2015; Mochtak, 2016). There are several possible reasons for this: the fragility of democratic institutions in countries

[1] Our unit of analysis is countries which experience a spell of institutional change towards democracy by allowing a certain level of political competition, but which do not necessarily end up becoming fully democratic regimes.

moving towards democracy means that democratic governance may not be entirely accepted by all actors in the electoral arena as the only game in town. Moreover, the democratization period is one that is typically at high risk of political violence as it can be used by some domestic actors to opportunistically raise their demands (Snyder, 2000). Finally, democratizing regimes have typically experienced a reduction in the forms of heavy state repression that characterizes authoritarian states, however these means of securing peace may not yet have been replaced by fully-functioning democratic mechanisms. The use of violence at election time is thus a distinct risk in the political regimes under study in this article. For these reasons, understanding electoral intimidation in democratizing countries is of considerable importance.

Since the 1970s, a large number of states have made transitions from uncontested authoritarianism to some form of contested political regime. While some countries have become full democracies, a large number of them have retained only some features of democracy (Levitsky & Way, 2010). A key element to observe this institutional variation involves electoral conduct and electoral outcomes (Schedler, 2013). In virtually all such contexts, the trajectory of democratic consolidation is one in which power-holders must learn to lose elections and adapt to extended periods in opposition. Indeed, alternation in power is for scholars a defining feature of democratic consolidation and institutionalization (Fearon, 2011; Przeworski, 2005).

We argue that electoral turnover is the most important brake on electoral intimidation in the democratizing context, and that incumbent leaders are most likely to use intimidation where a norm of changing governments has

not yet been institutionalized. Specifically, we advance a two-step argument showing first that that the presence of impartial electoral management bodies (EMBs) is key to upholding the integrity of electoral processes in democratizing regimes. When EMBs exhibit genuine political autonomy, they pave the way for elections that enable alternation in power. The second step in the argument is to show that alternation in power engenders norms of peaceful coexistence and dissuades incumbents from employing repressive electoral tactics for fear that they may be the victims of such practices at some point in the future. These conjectures are tested and confirmed on a global dataset of 53 states that transitioned to democratic electoral competition between 1989 and 2014.

The article makes several important contributions to the literature. It extends our understanding of electoral violence to democratizing countries. By doing so, the article identifies institutional dynamics that hinder or promote electoral intimidation in the early stages of democracy. As such, this research also makes an important contribution to the literature on democratization, demonstrating how the consolidation of democratic institutions can serve to maintain electoral peace. In addition, the analysis conducted here helps to flesh out our growing understanding of how electoral management bodies operate to regulate democratic processes.

The logic of EMBs

As noted above, our argument has two components: We argue that in democratizing regimes, leaders are frequently under pressure to delegate power

to independent electoral management bodies, and that such electoral management bodies in turn facilitate alternation in power. A number of scholars have recognized that EMBs are key players in ensuring electoral integrity and peaceful polls (van Ham & Lindberg, 2015; Norris, 2014; Orji, 2017), yet there has been limited discussion of how they achieve this. In the 1990s, there was a strong emphasis on formal EMB independence, and many of the electoral management infrastructures of new democracies are based on this model, which contrasts with the government administration of elections that is most common in long-established democracies (López-Pintor, 2000). The logic of adopting an independent EMB is that the actor who makes this decision also makes a credible commitment to hold truly competitive elections. Once autocratic regimes decide to open up political competition, the adoption of an impartial electoral management body is an institutional device that signals the strength of this commitment, as well as being a mechanism to ensure the legitimacy of the electoral outcome (North, 1993; Svolik, 2013). In this regard, the impartiality of the EMB is what determines the credibility of holding competitive elections. A number of studies, however, have demonstrated that the formal independence of electoral management bodies is far less important than their *de facto* autonomy (Birch, 2011; Birch & Van Ham, 2017; Hartlyn, McCoy & Mustillo, 2008; Opitz, Fjelde & Höglund, 2013). *De facto* autonomy is a matter of impartiality and freedom from political interference. Regardless of their formal design, EMBs that achieve *de facto* autonomy play a crucial role in ensuring that elections have credibility and integrity, and the that electoral process is peaceful. Though not all forms of electoral misconduct involve technical electoral procedures, pop-

ular confidence in the conduct of elections is closely tied to perceptions of electoral authority independence (Bowler et al., 2015; Kerr, 2013; McAllister & White, 2011; Norris, 2014). And the belief that an election may be or has been fraudulent is a common trigger for outbursts of anger and violence (Höglund, 2009; Sisk, 2012).

The literature that specifically focuses on EMBs and electoral violence is largely limited to practitioner reports and a handful of case studies, mostly of Sub-Saharan African countries (Kammerud, 2011; Orji, 2017). These analyses suggest that inclusive and well-functioning electoral management bodies have an important role to play in mitigating and deterring violent elections by documenting intimidation and imposing sanctions, thus significantly raising the cost of violent intimidation for incumbents. The mechanisms by which this happens are, however, not clear. We argue that *de facto* EMB autonomy paves the way for electoral turnovers, which are in turn associated with reduced levels of intimidation. Our argument builds on the expectation that when incumbents lock in *de facto* EMB autonomy in the post-transition period, this then facilitates alternation in power which acts as a deterrent for incumbents to engage in electoral intimidation.

Alternation in power as a mechanism to solve conflict

Alternation in power is a defining feature of our stylized understanding of democracy, as the ability of electorates to throw the rascals out is the princi-

pal mechanism of popular accountability in democratic regimes (Przeworski, Stokes & Manin, 1999). But though democratic thinking has long viewed alternation in power in terms of accountability, we argue that it also plays an additional important role in the democratic process: it provides actors with an incentive to refrain from engaging in violent repression and abuse when they are in power. Once dislodged from power, current incumbents may well face a number of years in the political wilderness, and they have an incentive to ensure that their periods out of power are not wracked with peril. If they mistreat their opponents while in power, they have every reason to believe that they may suffer the same fate at a future date if an electoral defeat is observed. The expectation of alternation should thus in theory be a powerful means of curbing violent intimidation (Przeworski, 2011).

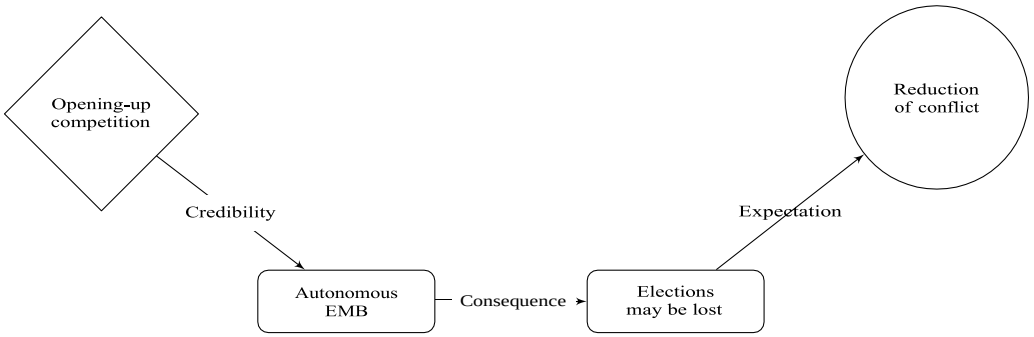
To happen, alternation in power requires a number of conditions to be met. Incumbents need to anticipate that conceding electoral defeat will not result in any serious damage to them or to their followers (Przeworski, 2005). If that is not the case, incumbents may, indeed, seek to rig elections including the use of harassment (Ruiz-Rufino, 2018). Likewise, opposition forces need to have a high degree of certainty that they will be able to win election at some later point in time, even if the incumbent implements policies that may not be beneficial to the opposition's interests during the current electoral period. If these conditions hold, electoral losers will be prepared to admit defeat, and alternation in power is likely to be observed. Moreover, once alternation in power occurs, it becomes a habit (Przeworski, 2015; Cho & Logan, 2014).

Furthermore, we conceive alternation in power as a post-transition endogenous process which depends on political actors' expectations given the in-

stitutional rules under which they are governed. In democratizing regimes, actors often have limited experience on which to build expectations about the future behavior of their political rivals. Under these circumstances, they benefit from institutions that serve as coordination devices to ensure a level playing field for electoral competition. At the same time, collective benefit does not ensure that such institutions will emerge, as incumbents have incentives to maintain political control over the institutions that allocate power in order to extend their tenure. However, following a democratic opening in which competition increases, the strategic incentives of incumbents often change. Not only do they wish to retain power, they also desire to do so free from the fear of a violent ouster by opposition forces. Fearon (2011) shows formally how leaders have incentives credibly to commit to upholding democratic institutions in order to stave off the threat of rebellion and a disorderly exit from power. The use of an autonomous electoral management body can play this role of credible commitment.

Figure 1 illustrates our theoretical logic where impartial EMBs facilitate alternation in power, which creates incentives for decreased levels of electoral intimidation.

Figure 1. Summary of theoretical argument.



The following hypotheses summarize our discussion so far:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): *Alternation in power serves to quell electoral violence in countries that have inaugurated multiparty competition.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2): *De facto EMB autonomy plays a major role in guaranteeing alternation in power.*

These hypotheses might make the reader consider whether the causal logic considered here is one that is specific to state-initiated intimidation. Though the comparative evidence suggests that state actors (and their proxies) are responsible for most electoral violence (Straus & Taylor, 2012), opposition and insurgent groups do also use violent strategies in electoral contexts (Burchard, 2015; Collier & Vicente, 2014; Matanock & Staniland, 2018), and they may also have an incentive to refrain from engaging in electoral violence if they think that power may at some point in the future be available to them through electoral means. However, there are at least two reasons to believe that the causal process considered here pertains mainly to intimidation initiated by the state. First, state actors in democratizing regimes are by definition those that have, at least, some a priori commitment to upholding democratic standards; otherwise the states they run would not be included in our study. The same may not necessarily be true of all minor opposition parties and insurgent groups that undertake violence at election time; they may have no commitment to democracy and no expectation of achieving power through democratic means. The logic of alternation in power would thus not apply to them, even if it applied to the primary opposition party in the country in question. Second, a country's main opposition party is less

likely than the incumbent to employ intimidation as an electoral strategy due to the potential for government punishment and reprisals, and also due to the more limited means at their disposal to effect credible intimidation. If the anticipation of assuming power had any impact on their strategy, it would thus be dampened by their lower propensity to resort to intimidation overall.

One might also question whether the autonomy of EMBs was genuinely exogenous to alternation in power. After all, both EMB autonomy and alternation may be a function of the willingness of the incumbent party at the time of political liberalization to allow genuine competition. We assume that EMB autonomy is exogenous to alternation in power for two reasons. Firstly, making EMBs fully autonomous may be explained by international pressures similar to, for example, the expectation that states will invite electoral monitors (Hyde, 2011). Indeed, there is some literature indicating how international organizations sponsored the creation of autonomous EMBs in countries moving towards democracy (López-Pintor, 2000). Secondly, we assume that incumbents do not necessarily have full information about the true level of support for their government. Leaders of democratizing regimes typically delegate power to autonomous EMBs in order to bolster their own legitimacy (Magaloni 2006), which may be necessary in order to avert popular unrest (Chernykh & Svolik, 2015). Often they do so in the belief that an impartial EMB will not seriously impair their ability to win elections, due to misperceptions of their true popularity (Hartlyn, McCoy & Mustillo, 2008; Slater & Wong, 2013). This phenomenon, termed by Slater & Wong (2013) "conceding to thrive" occurs where authoritarian rulers embrace democrati-

zation in the hopes of benefitting from it. The literature on democratization is rich in cases of democratizing authoritarian elites misperceiving their likely long-term electoral prospects under open electoral competition and therefore allowing genuine competition overseen by an autonomous EMB only to fail before long - if not always immediately - at the polls. In addition to the east Asian cases of Taiwan, South Korea and Indonesia analyzed by Slater and Wong, Mexico and Ghana (discussed at some length below) are perhaps the best examples of this phenomenon; other examples include Bulgaria (Birch et al., 2002) and Kyrgyzstan (Jones-Loung, 2000). One of the unintended consequences of delegation to an autonomous electoral authority is thus that alternation in power takes former authoritarian leaders unawares. And once EMB autonomy is locked in, it may be difficult for a nascent democracy to move away from this institution, due to the effect of path dependence. Given the importance of electoral management autonomy to international observers and the international community more generally, the credibility of a competitive regime is likely to depend to a large extent on how genuinely independent its EMB is, and efforts to subordinate the electoral management body to political control may well lead to high international legitimacy costs (Birch, 2011).

A second possible objection to this argument is that of pacted transitions or other cases where packages of electorally-relevant political reforms are introduced at the time of transition. Pacts and packages of this type typically include provisions for autonomous EMBs together with reforms to the police, the judiciary and the electoral system that simultaneously increase the likelihood of subsequent alternation in power and reduce the chances of vi-

olent elections. In such cases, it might be argued that political will and a genuine commitment to democratize are the principal drivers of change, and that EMB autonomy and alternation in power have little if any independent causal efficacy. However, though the initial impetus to change may be a pro-democratic commitment, the history of democratic transitions demonstrates that they are often derailed down the road as commitment wanes. All the countries in our dataset experienced this original impetus to democratize on the part of leaders, whereas only some managed successfully to transition to consolidated democracy. Our argument is that genuine EMB autonomy locks this commitment in place long enough to enable alternation in power, and that alternation in turn dampens actor appetite to employ coercive electoral strategies.[2]

Illustrative case studies

We discuss the cases of Mexico and Ghana to further illustrate our theoretical argument. These two cases provide examples of the ways in which electoral management bodies can foster alternation in power, and how alternation in power can in turn provide a strong disincentive to the use of intimidation as an electoral tactic.

[2]Our data shows that adopting a relatively autonomous EMB was a decision mostly made simultaneously with opening up political competition. Only 18 countries in our sample experienced some change in the level of autonomy of EMB and in those cases, alternation in power was observed in 51% of cases (62).The level of EMB autonomy remained stable over time in 35 countries where 200 elections occurred; in this scenario, alternation in power was also observed in 51% of the cases (102). Finally, 16 countries in our dataset experienced alternation in power in the first competitive election when they also used an autonomous EMB.

Mexico

The political changes that led Mexico to adopt a genuinely independent electoral authority are well-documented. The ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) maintained its hegemonic position in Mexican politics for 67 years through a combination of tactics, including moderate amounts of electoral fraud. However, the main basis of the party's support was an extensive system of electoral clientelism which was particularly strong in rural areas. Over time, economic development and social change eroded the PRIs clientelist support base; at the same time, there was less pork to distribute to voters due to the government's decision to adopt neoliberal economic policies following the 1982 debt crisis. During the 1980s, the party therefore relied increasingly a combination of electoral fraud and intimidation to win elections (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Simpser, 2012). The level of abuse committed by the PRI in the 1988 elections and the widespread perception that challenger Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas had been robbed of victory sparked a protracted series of post-electoral demonstrations which eventually resulted in electoral reforms (Eisenstadt, 2004).

The use of intimidatory tactics had clearly cost the PRI dear in terms of legitimacy and popular support. At this point, key PRI leaders decided they would undoubtedly be better off in the long run tying their hands by delegating the administration of elections to an independent authority - the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). This act of credible commitment simultaneously restored confidence in electoral procedures and also gave the party a legitimacy boost (Magaloni, 2006). Though the PRI lost the presidency

in 2000, it had installed a system of electoral governance that was robust enough to prevent political domination by Mexico's new leaders. This meant that the PRI was able to continue competing electorally unhindered, and in time it returned to power, ushering in a period of alternation in power that has lasted nearly two decades. During this time, electoral intimidation has declined considerably. After the IFE became operational in the mid-1994, the level of electoral intimidation shifted from "...sporadic instances of violent harassment and intimidation by the government or its agents..." to "...no harassment or intimidation of opposition by the government or its agents".[3] The Federal Election Court (TRIFE), the IFE's sister EMB, has considerable powers to punish electoral wrong-doing, such that all parties are aware that if they want to maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of the people, they need to play by the formal electoral rules (Nohlen, 2005). Moreover, party-nominated members of the IFE are effective in playing the role of *party watchdog* and monitoring potential wrong-doing by their rivals (Estévez, Magar & Rosas, 2008). Thus advent of truly independent electoral authorities and the possibility of alternation in power have turned intimidation from a vote-winner to a vote-loser.

Ghana

The electoral situation in contemporary Ghana is rather different from that in Mexico. Though electoral violence has yet to be entirely removed from the electoral process (Asunka et al., 2017; Oduro, 2012), its use is mainly by non-

[3]Electoral intimidation is measured using the variable *v2elintim_ord* from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset.

state actors against each other, and its incidence is considerably mitigated by electoral and political institutions that serve as models in the African context. Ghana was the first British colony in Africa to gain independence, in 1957. Following a coup in 1966, the nascent republic descended into an extended period of largely authoritarian rule, only to emerge in the early 1990s via a transition to multiparty democracy. Between 1990 and 1996, the pathway to democracy, which included the delegation of electoral administration to relatively autonomous bodies, was motivated by the desire of authoritarian leader Jerry Rawlings to build international legitimacy, to end which electoral credibility played an essential role (Levitsky & Way, 2010: 302-4). Since 1992, elections have been relatively free and fair, with alternations in power in 2000, 2008 and 2016. Ghana's transition to multiparty politics was accompanied by the introduction of a system of electoral governance based on power-sharing and confidence building via dialogue fora involving electoral administrators together with political parties and civil society organizations. The Ghanaian approach to electoral management is thus as much about shaping norms as it is about imposing formal sanctions (Gyimah-Boadi, 1999). The Ghanaian electoral commission has a reputation for integrity (Collier & Vicente, 2012; Ruiz-Rufino, 2018). Odendaal notes that "The EC [Electoral Commission] has achieved a strong reputation in the region for relative efficiency, professionalism and conflict-resolution capacity. Its strategy of working with political actors in defusing potential flash points has been highly commended by international observers" (Odendaal, 2009: 65). Oduro is somewhat more critical of the efficiency and professionalism of the Ghanaian EMB, but he concurs that it is impartial:

> ‘Several features of the election management body have contributed to its independence and expertise. In particular, security of tenure in its executive membership has liberated it from influence and promoted continuity in the commission’s administration” (Oduro, 2012: 221).

Additional semi-formal measures take the form of dialogue and confidence building institutions and practices which have been effective in defusing potentially conflictual situations and building trust between parties. The Electoral Commission maintains an Interparty Advisory Council which serves as a forum for inter-party dialogue and the establishment of norms of nonviolence (Gyimah-Boadi, 1999). The United Nations Development Programme has also been active in setting up institutions to mediate disputes (especially at the time of the 2004 election, held in the wake of the assassination of a traditional leader which prompted unrest in the north of the country and facilitating dialogue between relevant political actors (Odendaal, 2009: 65). The subsequent introduction of a National Peace Council together with Regional and District Peace Advisory Councils to undertake conflict mediation with all stake-holders further strengthened Ghana’s institutional capacity for conflict prevention (Odendaal, 2009: 66). More recently, a National Election Security Task-force (NEST) was established at the time of the 2016 election to coordinate violence prevention measures (EU, 2017: 8). Thus in the context of a young state where formal institutions are not so well entrenched, semi-formal conflict mediation institutions play an important role in collaboration with the formal EMB in defusing tensions and building confidence at election time.

The dual approach has been remarkably successful, and party alternation

in power has occurred regularly since 1992. The result has been a decline in electoral intimidation, especially since the late 1990s when the possibility of alternation became a reality. The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) indicator of electoral intimidation indicates complete absence of intimidation from 2000 onwards.[4] This is the year when the first alternation in power took place. In addition, Ghana has received generally favorable reports from international observers (EU, 2017, 2009). While violence and intimidation have not been eliminated entirely from the Ghanaian electoral arena, they have been largely controlled by bipartisan efforts to ensure peace. The main parties in Ghana both have strong incentives to maintain electoral credibility and to prevent violence from undermining confidence in elections, given that they both have real chances of assuming power following the vote. Genuine electoral completion has thus cemented partisan engagement with violence prevention institutions.

The Mexican and Ghanaian examples serve to trace the links between EMB accountability, alternation in power and the reduction in electoral violence. In both cases, the advent of genuine electoral competition in the early-to-mid 1990s accompanied the introduction and institutionalization of impartial electoral authorities. Yet in neither case did electoral intimidation decline immediately. It was not until the late 1990s and early 2000s that violence witnessed marked drops, and this change in both cases coincided with alternation in power. These examples thus provide good illustrations of the way in which EMB impartiality works to deter electoral intimidation, via

[4]The variable *v2elintim ord* moves from 3 (a restrained level of intimidation) between 1992 and 1996 to 4 (Complete absence of intimidation) from 2000 onwards.

alternation in power.

Data and method

To test our hypotheses, we use a dataset that contains 53 countries in the period between 1989 and 2014. Our dataset has 331 observations and the unit of analysis is the election-year.[5] We select our units based on three criteria. First, we exclude states that were fully democratic between 1945 and 1989 uninterruptedly.[6] Second, we select countries that moved away from authoritarian political structures towards more open, competitive political systems. We capture this regime dynamic by choosing only countries that rank higher than 0 in the revised POLITY score.[7] Our third criterion is that the state has remained above 0 in the *polity2* score for at least two consecutive elections.[8] There are three main justifications for this selection of cases. First, our study focuses on how alternation in power as a result of political competition may explain variations in levels of electoral intimidation by the incumbent; this excludes purely authoritarian regimes where electoral turnover is typically the result of internal coups or civil war (Gandhi, 2008). Secondly, by focusing on countries that have moved away from authoritarian regimes since 1989 we are creating a dataset where we control for the level

[5]The dataset includes both parliamentary and presidential elections.

[6]We consider a fully democratic country one that scores above 5 in the variable *polity2* in the POLITY IV dataset.

[7]More concretely, we use the variable *polity2* in the POLITY IV dataset and by choosing values greater than 0, we exclude extreme values -66, -77 and -88 which refer respectively to ”foreign interruptions”, ”interregnum” or ”transitions” (Marshall & Jaggers, 2015).

[8]Given that executive tenure ranges between four and five years in most of the countries, countries entering our dataset must have experienced at least ten consecutive years of a competitive political spell using the POLITY criteria discussed above.

of political regime as well as recent transitions to democracy. Thirdly, by choosing countries with at least two electoral terms, we are maximizing the number of units with the level of political development we are interested in controlling for.[9]

Our main hypothesis suggests that one should expect less electoral intimidation when the institutional conditions shaping electoral competition result in episodes of alternation in power. Our baseline model is thus:

$$Intimidation_{ct} = \beta_0 + \delta Alternation_{ct} + \omega_k Controls_{ct} + \gamma_c + \tau_t + u_{ct}$$

where *Intimidation*, the outcome variable, refers to the level of electoral intimidation observed in country c in election year t. The main independent variable, *Alternation*, shows whether a country c, has previously experienced an alternation in power at election year t. Note that this variable actually refers to episodes of political turnover observed before the electoral year t as we further develop below. The model includes other relevant control variables as well as regional, γ, and decadal, τ , fixed effects. Estimating this model in this form is problematic, however, as there may be observed and unobserved factors that simultaneously explained the outcome and the main variable of interest. In particular, alternation in power may be observed only if certain conditions are met. This is a type of selection problem which may result in biased estimators if not corrected. To solve this endogeneity

[9]The sample of countries that we are using in this analysis corresponds to most countries within the third-wave of democratization. However to make sure that our models capture the dynamics we are interested in, we extend the sample of countries and year in the robustness test section to include countries that moved away from authoritarian regimes since 1945; we also expand the dataset to cover the full range of *anocracies* as defined by POLITY IV.

problem, we use a switching regression model based on Heckman's selection model and as developed by Quandt (1972) and Maddala (1986). These models are also used in other studies of political regimes (Gandhi, 2008; Cheibub & Hays, 2017). As indicated by Guo & Fraser (2014), switching regressions in observational studies that suffer from sample selection can be used to estimate treatment effects. In this sense, our model can be described by two equations, a regression equation:

$$Intimidation_{ct} = \beta_0 + \delta Alternation_{ct} + \omega_k Controls_{ct} + \gamma_c + \tau_t + u_{ct}$$

and a selection equation:

$$Alternation^*_{ct} = \theta_k \mathbf{z}_{ct} + \gamma^*_c + \tau^*_t + e_{ct}$$

where the vector $\mathbf{z}_{ct}$ contains the factors explaining alternation in power. Note that if $Alternation^* > 0$, then *Alternation* takes the value 1 and if $Alternation^* \leq 0$, the *Alternation* takes the value 0. The difference between switching regression and selection models like those used by Heckman is twofold. Firstly, the outcome variable, *Intimidation*, is observed for cases where countries have or have not experienced alternation in power. Secondly, the treatment enters the main regression equation in the following forms:

$$Intimidation_{ct} = \beta_0 + \omega_k Controls_{ct} + \gamma_c + \tau_t + u_{ct},$$
$$\text{when } Alternation^* \leq 0$$

And:

$$Intimidation_{ct} = \beta_0 + \delta(\theta \mathbf{z}_{ct} + i_{ct}) + \omega_k Controls_{ct} + \gamma_c + \tau_t + u_{ct},$$

$$\text{when } Alternation^* > 0$$

where the term i_{ct} includes the idiosyncratic error term, e_{ct}, as well as the fixed effects of the selection equation, $\gamma_c{}^*$ and $\tau_t{}^*$.

The outcome variable in our analysis is the level of government intimidation in country c in election t. This variable is operationalized using variable *v2elintim* from the Varieties of Democracy dataset. To ease the interpretation of the V-Dem variable, we have re-scaled the original values so that 100 indicates a strong level of government repression and intimidation to electoral actors and 0 indicates elections where no intimidation towards the opposition was employed by the government.[10]

[10]We use the original variable *v2elintim* in its interval form from the V-Dem Dataset v6.1 and v7.1. The operationalization of *v2elintim* is explained in the accompany- ing documentation of the dataset and the original variable ranges from -3.68 to 4.05. The indicator answers to the question In this national election, were opposition candidates/parties/campaign workers subjected to repression, intimidation, violence, or harassment by the government, the ruling party, or their agents? Responses are coded along the following ordinal scale: "The repression and intimidation by the government or its agents was so strong that the entire period was quiet"; "There was systematic, frequent and violent harassment and intimidation of the opposition by the government or its agents during the election period"; "There was periodic, not systematic, but possibly centrally coordinated harassment and intimidation of the opposition by the government or its agents"; "There were sporadic instances of violent harassment and intimidation by the government or its agents, in at least one part of the country, and directed at only one or two local branches of opposition groups" and "There was no harassment or intimidation of opposition by the government or its agents during the election campaign period and polling day." (Coppedge & et al., 2016).The following formula was used to transform the original variable *v2elintim*

$$Intimidation_{ct} = \left(\frac{v2elintim_{c,t} - v2elintim_{\max}}{v2elintim_{\min} - v2elintim_{\max}} \right) * 100$$

where $v2elintim_{c,t}$ refers to the the level of electoral intimidation in country c in year t; and $v2elintim_{\min}$ and $v2elintim_{\max}$ refer to the minimum and maximum values of *v2elintim*

Alternation in power is a binary variable that takes the value 1 if country c in year t has already experienced at least one alternation in power. This variable captures the history of the political regime in terms of electoral turnover. So, if country c has never experienced an alternation in power at the time of holding the elections, then the variable *alternation* takes the value 0. However, if a country has experienced at least one episode of alternation in power any time before the current election, then *alternation* takes the value 1. Note that such episode of alternation in power could have occurred at the latest in election *t-1*. This variable avoids problems of endogeneity with the outcome variable while capturing the mechanism that we are testing in this article.

In the selection equation, alternation in power is determined by the level of *de facto* autonomy of the electoral management bodies[11] and it enters the equation as the change in level of EMB autonomy compared to previous year.[12] As we argued above, *de facto* EMB autonomy should be a relevant predictor of alternation in power.[13] Following Cheibub (2007), presidential

respectively.

[11]The autonomy of the EMB is identified using variable *v2elembaut_ord* from the V-Dem dataset. Since we are only interested in estimating the effect of autonomous EMBs on our model, we create a binary variable where 1 indicates that the EMB is almost or completely autonomous (categories 3 and 4) and 0 if these conditions are not observed (categories 0 to 2). The distribution of the variable shows that 60% of the sample reveals full or high levels of autonomy. This distribution is consistent also with the literature indicating that democratizing countries from 1989 onwards were characterized by adopting fully or quasi-autonomous EMB institutions (López-Pintor, 2000).

[12]The operationalization of the variable is as follows: in the first observation, t_0, *EMB* enters the dataset with its original value, however from t_1 onwards, *EMB* reflects the level of autonomy of the electoral management body in period t compared to the previous observation.

[13]EMB is treated as exogenous in our selection model. We have tested the exogeneity of EMB in various ways. First, we have run an auxiliary regression where EMB is regressed on our alternation in power variable along the same control variables used in the selection equation and a lag of the outcome variable. The coefficient of alternation in power is not

regimes are also relevant in explaining alternation in power as incumbents in this type of regimes are more likely to win than in parliamentary systems. Finally, the level of development is also important in explaining alternations in power. As Przeworski (2005) and Benhabib & Przeworski (2006) show, the probability of winning an election decreases as development increases.[14] Presidential regimes is a binary variable where 1 indicates that a country is presidential. Finally, development is captured by levels of GDP per capita as obtained from the World Bank World Development Indicators.

The main regression equation includes several control variables. *Competition* is binary variable that indicates whether the elections were competitive meaning by this that there is a certain level of uncertainty around the outcome of the election.[15] Secondly, the main model also controls for the level of institutionalized constraints chief executives face when exercising their decision-making powers as such constraints may explain the willingness of the incumbent to engage in acts of intimidation.[16] Finally all models include an autoregressive vector of the outcome variable to control for lag effects along with regional and decade fixed effects to account for unobserved factors. Table 1 shows the main descriptive values of the relevant variables.

Figure 2 describes the relationship between alternation in power and levels of electoral violence without considering any selection correction for EMB

statistically significant at any of the accepted levels as Table A3 in the Online appendix shows. Secondly, we use IV analysis as shown below.

[14]Alternation in power is operationalized using variables *v2eltvrexn* and *v2eltvrig* from the V-Dem Dataset.

[15]The variable *competitive* is taken from Skaaning, Gerring & Bartusevičius (2015) as collected by the V-Dem Dataset.

[16]Executive constraints are measured using the variable *xconst2* from the POLITY Dataset.

Table I. Summary statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Outcome variable					
Intimidation	331	40.771	13.355	19.060	73.648
Determinants of intimidation					
Alternation	331	0.646	0.478	0	1
Competition	331	0.788	0.408	0	1
Executive Constraints	316	5.939	1.205	3	7
Determinants of alternation					
EMB	331	0.595	0.491	0	1
Presidential	331	0.888	0.315	0	1
GDP/cap	322	3,785.68	4,970.158	120.62	27,501.81

autonomy. Graphically, it can be seen how, on average, levels of intimidation are lower - low values of the outcome variable - when countries have experienced alternation in power at the time of the election than when they have not.

Results

The main claim of this article is that levels of electoral intimidation by government actors can be explained by how institutionalized democracy is. If a key component of democratic regimes is the selection of representatives using open, competitive and uncertain elections, then observing competing and rivaling platforms alternating in power is a sufficient condition to declare a regime democratic (Cheibub, Gandhi & Vreeland, 2010) and when this mechanism is observed, levels of electoral intimidation should be low. We test this hypothesis in several steps.

Figure 2. Levels of intimidation and alternation in power

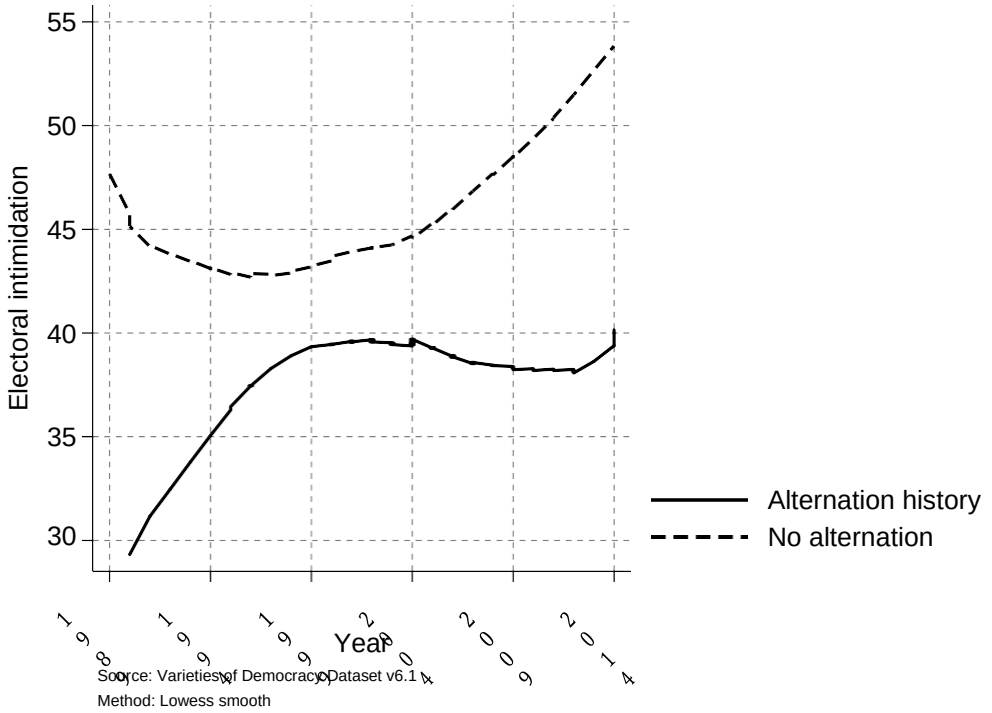


Table II shows a mean comparison between levels of intimidation in countries that experienced alternation in power and countries that did not. In our sample, previous electoral turnover did not occur in 117 cases (35%) and in those cases the mean value of intimidation was 44.61. Previous alternations in power were, however, observed in 214 cases (65%) and the mean value of intimidation was 38.66, thus, indicating less intimidation of electoral actors by the government. The difference between these two values, 5.94, is statistically significant at 5%, indicating the relevance of the association between these two variables.

When a regression model is run to estimate the linear effect of past alter-

Table II. Effect of alternation on intimidation

Mean (SD) of outcome	
Countries with no alternation in power (n=117)	44.616 (1.182)
Countries with alternation in power (n=214)	38.66 (0.903)
Unadjusted mean difference(a)	5.94 (1.50)***
Uncorrected Regression-adjusted mean (SE) difference	0.23 (0.97)
Corrected Regression-adjusted mean (SE) difference	-6.77 (2.93)**

Reported p-values in parentheses: ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
(a) Independent t-test on mean differences

nation on levels of intimidation controlling for other relevant covariates,[17] the coefficient is negative and not statistically significant.[18] This coefficient reflects the bias in the estimation of the parameters as a consequence of the endogeneity of the model. The corrected unbiased estimation is provided in the last row of Table II and it indicates a negative and statistically significant result in line with the expectations of our hypothesis and with the trend shown in Figure 2.

Table A2 in the Online appendix shows the full estimation of the corrected model. The table shows three models with different specifications.[19] The validity of the estimation can be seen in the third panel of Table A2. First,

[17]Our baseline model is estimated using OLS and panel-corrected standard errors.

[18]The full estimation of this model can be found in table A1 in the Online appendix.

[19]The model specifications depend on the type of fixed effects added. We use regional and decade fixed effects to control for unobserved entity or time invariant effects. Using regional rather than country fixed effects is justified given the small number of observations in some countries. The regions used are Latin America (the reference category), Asia, South-East Asia, Africa and Europe. Likewise, given that some countries, specially presidential regimes, held several elections in a given year, year fixed effects are replaced by a binary variable that captures whether the election took place between 1989 and 1999 or not.

the correlation of the errors - rho in the table - in the selection and regression equations is positive. A Chi-square testing $\rho = 0$ is also performed and, in all three cases, it is rejected, allowing us to conclude that the errors of the two equations are indeed correlated, which is a necessary condition for the application of a selection model. The inverse Mills ratio - lambda - is also positive and statistically significant, providing further evidence justifying the application of this treatment effect model.

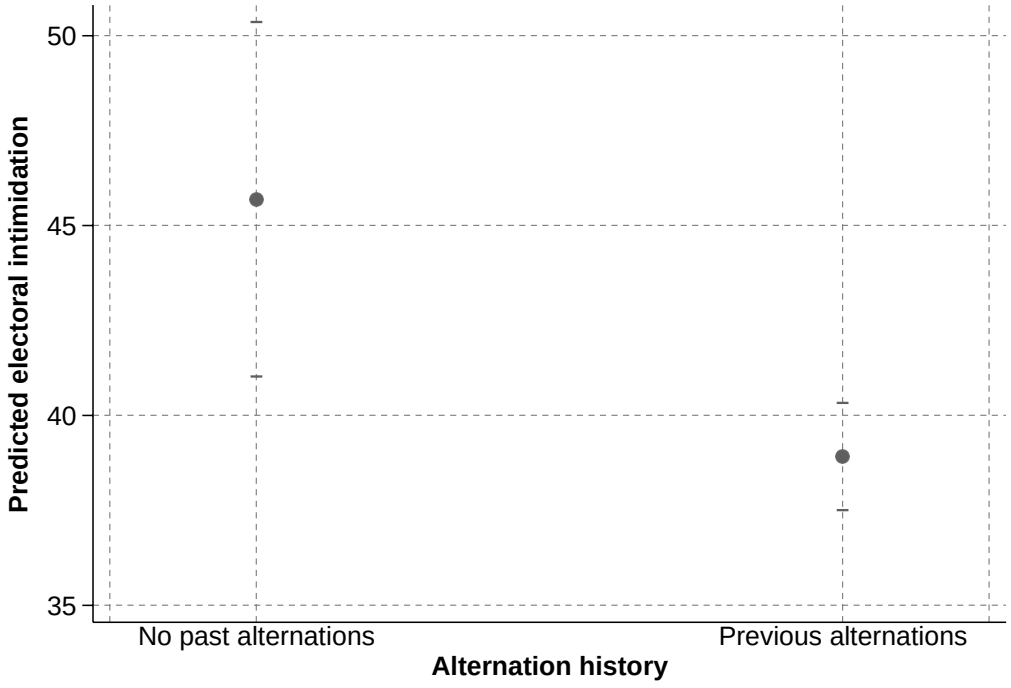
The selection equation also confirms the validity of the theoretical claims we made earlier. Importantly for the argument developed here, all three models show that having an autonomous electoral management body is positively associated with observing past episodes of alternation in power. These findings already provide a better understanding of the role an EMB may play in electoral competition (Hartlyn, McCoy & Mustillo, 2008; Hyde & Pallister, 2015). Development is statistically significant although the size of the coefficient is also small; finally, being a presidential regime does not seem to affect the probability of observing alternation in power.[20]

Lastly, the regression equation shows the average treatment effect of alternation once the model is corrected for selection and after controlling for relevant variables. As the first panel in Table A2 shows, this effect ranges from -6.89 when a model excluding fixed effects is used to -6.77 when a full model specification is used. In all cases, the effect alternation has on moderating intimidation is statistically significant and Figure 3 shows the predicted value of the outcome variable depending on whether a country had or had not

[20]The results hold if the variable EMB is used with the original five categories of the variable *v2elembaut_ord* from the V-Dem Dataset.

experienced an alternation in power in a given election. As the graph shows, the level of electoral intimidation in countries with no history of alternation in power is 45.7, however if alternation in power has occurred, then, the level of electoral intimidation is 38.91. This difference is statistically significant at 5%.

Figure 3. Predicted violence and alternation in power



Estimation based on Model 3 in Table A2

Robustness tests

In order to test the robustness of our findings, we conduct several analyses using alternative sample, estimations, explanations, different data sources and different outcome variables.[21] Our first group of robustness tests refers to the sample size and the selection of the unit of analysis. Table III be- low compares the coefficient for alternation used in the main analysis with a dataset that uses a time frame 1945 to 2015; a dataset that includes consolidated democracies in the period 1945-2015 and, finally, a dataset that expands our initial definition of democratizing regimes to also cover *anocracies* as defined by POLITY IV.[22] All the results maintain the negative direction of the relationship and they remain statistically significant.[23]

A second robustness test refers to our estimation model. In our previous analysis, we justified how EMB autonomy is considered to be exogenous in our model. Our second robustness test, however, questions this assumption as one might, for example, argue that observing de-facto autonomous EMBs is the result of a bargaining process between the governing and opposition elites which may also affect the future functioning of the electoral management body.[24] If this is the case, then our analysis would be biased as the

[21]This section only shows the robustness tests on sample size, case selection and estimation model. Additional robustness tests are discussed in the Online appendix.

[22]Anocracies are defined as those political regimes that range from -5 to 5 in the *polity2* score.

[23]The coefficients are, however, smaller than those in the original model. This is consistent with our argument. The extended sample includes countries that consolidated democracy very quickly - Jamaica and the Dominican Republic have each experienced six alternations in power since 1962 - and following our theoretical logic, more alternation in power should be associated with less electoral violence.

[24]Suppose also that observing an alternation in power and making an EMB autonomous could be simultaneous events.

Table III. Robustness tests - Samples

Model	Alternation	p	N
Original sample	-6.77	0.021	265
Since 1945	-3.5	0.002	716
Including consolidated democracies	-3.68	0.007	994
Including full range of anocracies	-3.67	0.004	872

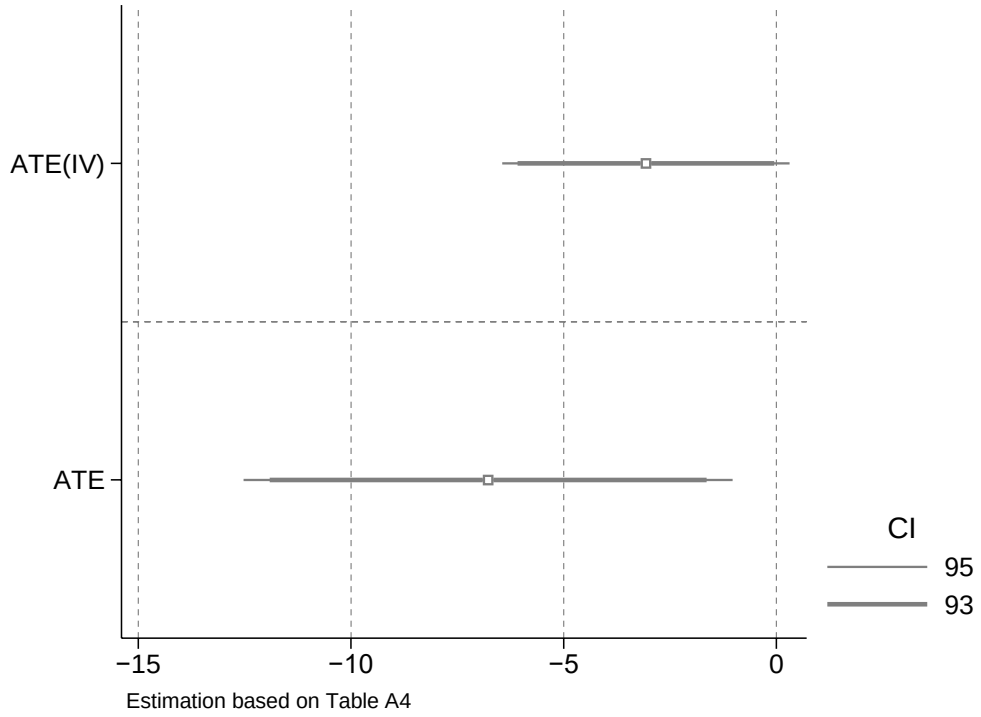
selection equation would not be properly identified. To solve this problem we repeat our main analysis using an instrumental variable approach. Following Bertocchi & Guerzoni (2012), we create a new variable which indicates the proportion of past elections that were occurred under a *de facto* autonomous EMB in election t.[25] Using this new variable as an instrument for EMB autonomy, we re-estimate the probit selection equation used in our models using a two-stage procedure[26] to then recalculate the treatment taking into account the IV estimation. Figure 4 shows the values of the coefficients before and after using IV. If we assumed some level of endogeneity between EMB and electoral turnover, we would still observe a negative and significant effect on electoral intimidation.[27]

[25]The indicator ranges from 0 for the first election to $\frac{EMB}{n-1}$ where $\sum EMB$ refers to the total number of elections managed under a *de facto* autonomous EMB just before election t and $n - 1$ is the number of previous elections in a given country observed in the dataset.

[26]The instrument is significant in the first stage of the regression and the F statistics is 210 which confirm its validity

[27]The p-value of the ATE(IV) coefficient is $p \geq 0.075$.

Figure 4. Effect of alternation in power using different estimations.



Conclusion

This article examines the use of intimidatory behavior in democratizing regimes. The analysis presented here has identified a previously unexamined pathway linking electoral management body autonomy to electoral intimidation via alternation in power. The analysis is robust to a range of possible objections, and the mechanism it describes is clearly evident in the cases of Mexico and Ghana examined.

If it is the case that *de facto* electoral authority independence is a key factor in shaping both alternation in power and electoral violence, this has consid-

erable implications for the scholarly study of electoral processes in democratizing contexts as well as for electoral assistance. The study of electoral integrity has begun to probe the effects of electoral management bodies on a variety of electoral phenomena, but understanding of this institution lags behind that of electoral systems, party systems or executive type. The analysis presented in this article suggests that electoral management bodies play a major role in shaping electoral processes. Though the article provides extensive descriptive and empirical evidence that supports the assumption that the autonomy of EMBs is exogenous to observing alternation in power, further analysis is required to better understand the causal relationship between the functioning of EMBs and electoral turnover. In this regard, future research could carefully examine the factors that push rulers to adopt autonomous EMBs and the consequences of this move for their political survival. Finally, the findings of this article are also relevant for practitioners working on electoral assistance who are concerned with electoral violence. The promotion of autonomous electoral management bodies emerges as a straightforward policy recommendation.

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Replication data

The dataset and dofiles needed to replicate the empirical analysis in this article, along with the Online appendix, can be found at http://www.prio.org/jpr/datasets.

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